

2023-2024

Parent & Student Policies and Procedures Handbook



Guided by the Core Principles of Public Waldorf Education

School Hours Monday-Friday

Kindergarten 8:30-1:25

Grades 1-8 8:15-2:00

Phone: 928-282-0171 Fax: 928-284-9565 Website: www.desertstarschool.org

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Welcome to Desert Star Community School

Waldorf Education

Waldorf education was founded by Rudolf Steiner in 1919. Waldorf education seeks to foster and develop a creative, educated, and healthful interest in life. People who develop skills of sensitivity and fortitude in childhood have the ability to contribute positively to all aspects of adult life as responsible individuals. The structure is based on a profound understanding of human development that addresses the needs of the growing child. Waldorf teachers strive to transform education into an art that educates the whole child—the heart and the hands, as well as the head.

Teachers in Waldorf schools are dedicated to generating an inner enthusiasm for learning within every child. They achieve this in a variety of ways. Subjects are presented in a pictorial and dynamic manner. It allows motivation to arise from within and helps children have the capacity to live a life of joyful learning.

The Waldorf curriculum is broad and comprehensive and is structured on a developmentally appropriate curriculum that integrates the arts and music with academic subjects. There are three developmental phases of childhood: from birth to approximately 7 years, from 7 to 14 years and from 14 to 21 years. Rudolf Steiner stressed to teachers that the best way to provide meaningful support for the child is to comprehend these phases fully and to bring "age appropriate" content to the children that nourishes healthy growth.

This unique approach touches and develops the feeling life of the child while enhancing the development of effort and will to participate. It enlivens the thinking capacities necessary for strong academic challenges in the world today. Desert Star provides a nurturing learning community that honors and respects the wonder of childhood. In this age of pervasive media and technological influences Desert Star offers a healthy, balanced alternative that draws upon both age-old traditions and cutting-edge research to determine how to best teach children and meet their needs.

The Waldorf approach of “head, heart and hands” helps children to integrate and retain what they learn through experiential, multi-sensory and emotionally engaged learning experiences. Our educational methods and curriculum are designed to invigorate the mind intellectually, engage the heart through experiences with creativity, beauty and wonder and to work actively with the hands and body throughout the day.

As a public charter school, we meet Arizona State Standards and testing requirements and comply with health and safety regulations, as well as educational laws applicable to Arizona Charter Schools. Our DSCS Waldorf-Methods curriculum meets and, in many instances, exceeds the state standards in timing and content. Some specific aspects of our curriculum come in a grade before or later than is recommended by state standards. We consistently work through these challenges while striving to bring forth a Waldorf Methods curriculum that supports joy with educational excellence.

Our goal is to inspire and empower students to reach their full academic and creative potential so they may lead fulfilling, purposeful lives and make positive contributions to the multi-cultural society and world community in which they live.

Enrollment

A student is formally admitted only after the required school records have been received and space is available in the class. In accordance with the Arizona State Statute a prospective Kindergarten student must be the age of 5 and a prospective 1st grader must be the age of 6 by September 1st of the school year. Children whose birthdays fall shortly thereafter will have the ability to enroll the following year.

Required Forms for Admission

Arizona State Law and Desert Star Community School (DSCS) require the following forms to be completely filled out by the parent/guardian prior to admittance:



- Entire Registration Form including:
 - Birth Certificate (ARS) 15-828:
 - A certified copy of the pupil's birth certificate.
 - Other reliable proof of the pupil's identity and age, including the pupil's baptismal certificate, an application for a social security number or original school registration records and an affidavit explaining the inability to provide a copy of the birth certificate.
 - A letter from the authorized representative of an agency having custody of the pupil pursuant to title 8, chapter 2 certifying that the pupil has been placed in the custody of the agency as prescribed by law.

- Copy of immunization records or exemption form (given upon request)
 - Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) 15-872 (B) states that “a pupil shall not be allowed to attend school without submitting documentary proof to the school administration unless the pupil is exempted from immunizations pursuant to section 15-873” with exemption on file.

- Ethnicity/Race/Military Identifier Form
- McKinney-Vento form
- Records Request form (only for grades 1-8)
- Arizona Residency Documentation form- MUST have a copy of the support documentation checked on the form attached
- Home Language Survey

Guidelines to Determine Eligibility

If you are enrolling your child into Kindergarten they MUST be 5 years old by September 1st. We will not make any exceptions.

In March, the awarding of spaces begins and continues through the summer. You will receive a letter once a space has been reserved for your child. Some additional spaces become available at the beginning of the school year when the plans of families of enrolled students unexpectedly change.

Students are positioned by priority levels.

- Current enrolled students.
- Applicants with currently enrolled siblings.
- Applicants will be put on a waiting list on a first come basis.

During the current academic year, applications are accepted per school policies. Applications for the upcoming academic school year are accepted starting in late February per open enrollment policies.

Campus Arrival & Departure

Driving on Main Campus

In order to protect the safety of the children and be considerate of our residential neighbors, the speed limit at all times on the school property and Recycler Road is 5 miles per hour. Please drive slowly and carefully around the drop off area while watching for children who may be walking to and from cars. Please do not park and leave your vehicle unattended in the drop off circle during pick-up or drop-off. ***For safety, a running vehicle may never be left unattended anywhere on campus. An employee will have permission to turn the car off and remove the keys under these circumstances.***

Arrival



Kindergarten

Arrival begins at 8:15 a.m. Please bring your child into the cubby room. School begins at 8:30 a.m.

Grades 1-8

- Gate will be opened at 8:00am
- Parents/guardians are to remain in the vehicle and enter the drop off lane. Please do not park your car and walk your student or enter the campus unless you have an appointment with the office. Teachers are unable to have conversations during this time as they are supervising students.
- Students will be instructed to exit the vehicle and enter the campus at the crosswalk area.
- Students will walk to their classroom and remain with their teacher until 8:15am. Older siblings will be allowed to walk the younger siblings to class and then they would go to their class.
- At 8:15am teachers will greet students and let them in the classroom.

- If your child arrives and the class is no longer outside they are tardy and will need to report to the office for a late slip to enter the classroom.

Dismissal

Kindergarten

Parents are to pick up at 1:25 p.m. Please arrive 5 minutes early.

Grades 1-8

For safety purposes please begin to arrive to pick up your children at 10:55am on half days and 1:55pm on regular days. ***Please do not arrive prior to those times.***

- Remain in your vehicle and enter the pick up lane.
- Students are ready to be picked up at 2:00pm
- Vehicles will be directed in the pick up lane and teachers will call students to enter into the car.
- Dismissal completed at 2:10pm

How you can support the process:

- Pull your vehicle as close as possible to the vehicle in front of you
- Leave the crosswalk area open on both sides
- Help your children enter the vehicle quickly
- Refrain from talking with teachers

Attendance

Attendance is a critical element of your child's education and has a significant impact on social well-being and achievement. One of the most important things you can do as a parent is to ensure that your child attends school regularly and arrives on time daily. Excessive tardies and early releases disrupt both the rhythm of the school day and the solidity of the classroom environment. Absences can negatively affect overall class progress.

Arizona Law states that 18 days absent in the school year (10%) could result in a student not being promoted to the next grade level. As a guideline, this is only 6 days per trimester. It is the expectation of DSCS that parents be strong partners in the area of attendance. Please call the attendance phone line (928-649-0316) if your child will be absent. Every absence and tardy negatively impacts our rich curriculum for all of the children.



Absences

Illness and Family Emergency (Excused Absence)

We recognize that under certain circumstances absence is unavoidable. If children are sick, by all means,

they need to stay home. In order for an illness to be considered an excused absence you must please notify the office on each day that will be missed. Be sure to include your name, your child's name and the reason for the absence. *The state requires that the school have parents give a description of the illness symptoms, i.e.: fever, cough, respiratory, flu, nausea.*

If you expect your child to be absent for 3 consecutive days, contact the teacher to determine make-up work. A doctor's note will be required for illnesses extending beyond one week.



Vacation (Unexcused Absence)

We ask that you make every effort to schedule family vacations during our many school breaks. If this is simply not possible, it is imperative that you meet with your child's teacher well before the absence to develop a plan to accommodate missed work. If your vacation extends beyond 10 consecutive school days your child may be withdrawn from Desert Star Community School. If a child is withdrawn, Desert Star is required by law to accept children from the waiting list for that class, so there is a possibility there will not be a place in that class when the child returns. You will have to contact the office to re-enroll your child.

Unexcused Absence

If you do not call the attendance phone line and advise the school of your child's absence he/she will be marked as an unexcused absence. Seven consecutive unexcused absences may result in a meeting with administration. If a pattern of unexcused absence appears to be developing, a meeting will be set up with parents, the class teacher and administration to address this concern. (Students in grades 5 –8 may be asked to attend as well.) Students will be withdrawn after 10 consecutive days of unexcused absence. If a child is withdrawn, Desert Star is required by law to accept children from the waiting list for that class, so there is a possibility there will not be a place in that class when the child returns.

Tardiness

Students arriving later than 8:15 ARE LATE and **MUST** be signed in at the office by a parent/guardian/ (or carpool driver) and the student will be accompanied by a staff member to be admitted to class. The parent is not permitted to walk a tardy student to class. If a pattern of unexcused tardies appears to be developing, a meeting will be set up with parents, the class teacher and administration to address this concern. (Students in grades 5– 8 may be asked to attend as well.)

Individual Early Release Procedures

Parents/Guardians need to stop in at the school office and sign their child out if a student is being released before the school day ends. A faculty or staff member will go to the class to release the child. The student will meet the parent/guardian at the office to leave campus. Excessive early releases may result in a meeting between the family and the teacher involved to establish if further intervention is warranted.

Please do not remove your child from school without signing him/her out first.

Transportation

Policies and Procedures

It is our intention to ensure the safety and respectful treatment of all bus riders, personnel and drivers. This policy is established to provide positive behavior and a safe environment for all riders. All students who use the bus and their parents will need to return a signed bus policy to the office **prior** to riding the bus. The signed policy must include the assigned bus stop.

At the beginning of the school year a roster is created to designate which students ride the bus and the assigned bus stop location. If you need your child to ride the bus and their normal routine is to be picked up at school, you must follow the instructions below.

Students must get on and off the bus at their assigned stop unless the office is notified on the transportation phone line or in writing.

If you need to change the normal assigned dismissal routine:

- Call the Transportation/Attendance phone line at 928-649-0316 prior to 1:30 PM
- Leave a message including the date, your name, your child's name, grade and the bus change that you are requesting.
- All changes must be received prior to 1:30 PM to ensure there is time to distribute the change to the class teacher and student.

Please be aware if you call the main school line to make any changes you will be redirected to call the Transportation phone line.



Transportation Policy

Riding the bus is a privilege - not a right.

Expected student behavior on the bus:

1. Students will follow all directions from the bus driver and monitor promptly and without argument.
2. Students will remain in their seats, facing forward, feet on the floor, when the bus is in motion-no exceptions.
3. All personal belongings will remain in a backpack on the floor by the student's feet. Only exception is reading a book.
4. No eating, drinking, chewing gum allowed on the bus. Water is acceptable with permission.
5. Treat all riders with respect— No swearing, teasing, inappropriate body gestures, loud talking or inappropriate touching, including pushing, fighting, shoving at any time.
6. Keep yourself and objects inside bus windows at all times.

7. Arizona Law forbids the following items on school buses: weapons, knives and other dangerous items, glass containers, animals, tobacco, drugs or alcohol.

8. No vandalizing. The student will be held responsible and bus privileges suspended until restitution.

9. Students are to keep all electronics in their backpacks. The only allowed usage is for music while wearing headphones. Watching videos, taking videos/pictures, playing games are not allowed. Students violating the usage will lose bus privilege and may have the electronic confiscated.

10. Students must get on and off the bus at their assigned stop. Students must give a note to the office from their parent/guardian to get off at any other location.

11. Students will need to be at the pickup points on time—the bus will leave at the designated time and will not stop along the route to admit latecomers.

Parents must arrive promptly at the bus stop after school to receive students.

Consequences for Student Infractions Depending on infractions one or more of these may be enforced:

- Seat change
- Community service
- Suspension from the bus Dependent on the severity of the infraction, a suspension may be enforced until a thorough investigation has been completed by the Administrator.

Parents will be notified verbally or in writing. Parents will meet with the Administrator and Bus Driver if necessary, regarding the behavior. The number of days suspended will be determined based on the severity of offense or number of infractions occurred in the current school year.

Upon reinstatement, further infractions may result in permanent suspension of bus privileges. Parents will be notified for each infraction via the school communication platform.

Bus Stop Locations and Times

Please be at your bus stop on time and be aware times may vary due to unforeseen circumstances. Refer to the school website for the most current bus routes and times. The bus policies and procedures will be communicated at the beginning of each school year. If there are unforeseen circumstances that prevent you from being on time to the bus stop, please call the office.

Carpooling

Desert Star strongly supports carpooling and will make every effort to assist families in developing carpools. Our commitment is to reduce the number of cars coming onto our campus as much as possible. The benefits of carpooling are an important part of Desert Star’s mission: less stress on families, stronger community connections, less pollution and improved relations with our neighbors. We ask that everyone make a concerted effort to carpool with at least one other family whenever possible. *Please note that the office does not coordinate carpools. Always make arrangements for pick up prior to the school day.*

Dress Code

This is a living code and subject to change as the Grade School Faculty studies and updates as needed. Our school strives to provide a learning environment that enables students to be themselves in the most genuine and truthful of ways and one in which every student is fully able to participate in all activities of their ability. All students and staff are expected to dress in a manner appropriate for an inclusive environment, focused on learning. Students and staff are responsible for managing their personal distractions. No student shall be referred to as “a distraction” due to their appearance or attire. Students should not face unnecessary barriers to school attendance. Students must wear:

- Top (shirt, blouse, sweater, sweatshirt, tank, etc.)
- Bottoms (pants, shorts, skirt, dress, etc.)
- Closed-toe shoes

To provide the best learning environment students may not wear clothing, jewelry, or personal items that:

- Are pornographic, contain threats, or that promote illegal or violent conduct such as the unlawful use of weapons, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or drug paraphernalia
- Demonstrate hate group association/affiliation and/or use hate speech targeting groups based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious affiliation, or other protected groups
- Clothing must cover private parts in opaque (not able to be seen-through) material. No crop tops
- Cover the student’s face to the extent that the student is not identifiable (except clothing/headgear worn for a religious or medical purpose) Attire worn in observance of a student’s religion is not subject to this policy.

Typical consequences for a violation of this policy include parent/guardian contact or conference and the directive to cover, change, or remove the noncompliant attire. A student may be instructed to leave their classroom briefly to change clothes and the Administrative Director will be notified of the violation. The Teacher will notify a student’s parent/guardian of the school’s response to violations of the student dress policy.



Change of Clothes

Kindergarteners and First graders should bring the following items to have on hand if needed: extra shirt, pants (or shorts), socks and underwear. The classrooms and office do not have any spare clothing available.

Nature Walks

Due to desert hiking and safety concerns, students without proper required equipment, clothing, shoes and water, WILL NOT be able to join their class on nature walks. Please be certain your child is properly equipped. A change of shoes may be kept in your child's cubby.

Electronic Devices and Personal Property

Use of Electronic Devices at School

1. Cell phones, smart watches and other electronic devices must be turned off and kept in a backpack at school, unless otherwise permitted by a DSCS employee in the classroom or on campus during school hours.
2. Cell phones are not allowed to be used during off campus school events.
3. Cell phones, cameras, or other devices should not be used to photograph or film others without their consent.
4. Parents are reminded that in cases of emergency, the main office is the appropriate point of contact to ensure that your child is reached quickly and assisted in an appropriate way.
5. If it is necessary for a student to contact their family during school hours, they will only be permitted to call from the office phone with permission.

Care for Electronic Devices

1. Students who bring cell phones or other electronic devices to school are solely responsible for the safety and security of those devices.
2. The school accepts no responsibility for cell phones or other electronic devices that are lost, damaged, or stolen at school or while traveling to and from school.

Process for Violation of This Policy

Students who violate the rules for the use of cell phones and other electronic devices, set forth above, will face corrective action as described below:

First violation – warning by teacher, teacher may confiscate for the remainder of the school day. Teacher will notify the parent of the violation.

Second violation – cell phone/electronic device confiscated by teacher and turned in to administration to be picked up at the end of the school day.

Third violation – confiscation, item given to administrator to be picked up at end of the day or later by parent/guardian.

Fourth violation - confiscation, item given to administrator to be picked up at end of the day or later by parent/guardian. The student will no longer be allowed to bring the item to school for the remainder of the school year.

Pets

No animals are legally permitted on the school campus, on or off leash, for health, safety and liability reasons. The only exception is if specific permission is given from administration or a teacher.

Lost and Found

A lost-and-found box will be kept on campus. Please check it regularly. Unclaimed items left for longer than one month may be donated to charity.



Lunch and Nutrition Guidelines

Students in grades 1 – 8 need to bring a snack and lunch every day except on half days when children will only need a snack. Kindergartners will only need to bring a snack.



Please follow these guidelines when packing your child's lunch:

1. Only non-carbonated water is allowed to drink on campus. Please include a full re-usable wide-mouthed water bottle. Refill stations are available.
2. We ask that parents supervise the packing of lunches and make sure the snack and lunch is fully prepared. Teachers do not have the facilities or assistance for heating or cooking. Warm soups can be sent in a thermos.
3. Send perishable food in an insulated lunch box with an ice pack.
4. Pack a well-balanced lunch focusing on whole and healthful foods. Include proteins, healthy carbohydrates, fruits and vegetables so that your child has good energy for the afternoon. We

highly recommend avoiding pre-packaged lunches and snacks. Some children are sensitive to the artificial ingredients, preservatives and food coloring used in processed foods. Please eliminate or limit these items as much as possible.

5. Please only send foods low in sugar. Candy, sugary treats or gum is not allowed.
6. Please make an effort to reduce the environmental impact of packaging waste and use reusable containers. This includes using a reusable lunch bag instead of paper or plastic bags which often end up blown onto the playground by the wind.

At this time the school does not provide snacks or lunch. Students who arrive at school without a lunch or not enough in their lunch will call home for food to be brought to school. Students should not share their lunches with other students due to allergy issues and lack of permission by parents to do so. Our policy is to have each student pack in and out so parents can monitor their child's food intake during school hours.

If your child has special nutritional needs or if you have questions about any of these guidelines, please let your child's teacher know. Food allergies must be listed on the emergency medical form and be made known to the teacher at the beginning of the school year.

Birthday Celebrations

Each class has their own birthday protocol to honor students. The school strongly recommends that you check with the teacher about this. If bringing a snack to share, we recommend sugar-free snacks such as popcorn, vegetables, and homemade goods.

Only send invitations to school if **ALL** of the students in the class are invited. We are trying to protect the children who are not invited from hurt feelings. This can be a devastating experience for those left behind.



Health and Safety Policies

Keeping your child at home when ill:

Children should be kept at home under the following circumstances:

1. The child is not well enough to play outdoors.
2. The child has any of the following symptoms: fever, sore throat, yellow/green discharge from the nose, congested cough, discharge from the eyes, rash, or vomiting.
3. The child has a communicable illness, such as chicken pox, strep throat, lice, rash, etc. **In this case, please notify the school immediately so that we may inform others as necessary.**

If your child becomes ill or majorly injured during the school day, he or she will be sent to the office for care and you will be called. In the event that we are unable to reach you, we will call the emergency contacts you have provided. Please be sure you keep the office up-to-date with any changes in contact information. Students who are ill must be picked up within 45 minutes, as we do not have a nurse.

Behavior Policy

Student Behavior Guidelines

In order for a discipline program to be consistent and effective, parents and guardians are expected to support teachers and administrators.

The Desert Star student body, faculty, staff and administration work with socially inclusive models for school-wide positive behavior and discipline, and observe the following school rules:

1. We are Respectful
2. We are Responsible
3. We are Kind
4. We are Safe



Discipline at DSCS is to be considered an aspect of social guidance and student accountability. The purposes of discipline are these:

1. To provide a classroom situation conducive to learning.
2. To promote character training, i.e., to cultivate the virtues that ensure ethical living and to redirect misguided behavior.

3. To develop self-discipline.

Expected Behaviors at School

1. Follow instructions of the adult in charge AZ HB 2123 Students shall submit to the authority of the teachers, administrators and governing board
2. Students are to honor all safety guidelines
 - a. Keeping hands to themselves
 - b. Using appropriate words, actions and gestures as determined by school
 - c. Walking unless on playground
3. Handle all school materials and furnishings with care and use responsibly. AZHB 2123 15-842 1-cite
4. Treat others with consideration and kindness.
 - a. Choose alternatives to physical or verbal abusive confrontations. ie seeking an adult, walking away, speaking the virtues, use conflict management techniques.
5. Dress according to school policy
6. Students are to support the instructional setting
 - a. Sit in seat properly
 - b. Raise hand to speak or get out of seat
 - c. Keep hands to self and leave other student materials alone
 - d. Use hand signals for bathroom and water in the classroom
 - e. Student arrives on time for a full day of school unless ill ARS 15-803
 - f. Students will respect the learning environment by engaging in behavior that supports learning and allows the teacher to manage the classroom. HB 2123

When a DSCS student does not follow the rules and guidelines of the classroom, playground, or other school facility (bus, field trip, etc.) a consequence will be given to the student. At times, removal from the group is necessary to protect the students and/or the learning environment of the school. ***This removal is necessary when a student:***

1. is insubordinate in an irrational, threatening or unreasonable manner, HB2123
2. puts another in danger,
3. prevents other students from learning or prevents the teacher from maintaining control or the classroom

Level 1

Behaviors include but are not limited to:

- teasing or gossiping
- active defiance
- vulgar language
- name calling
- computer use violations

Procedure

Step 1: If another student is affected by behavior, the adult will check on that child first.

Step 2: The adult will approach the disruptive behavior with a calm, neutral demeanor, and set limits to keep other students safe.

Step 3: The adult will redirect or use it as a teachable moment in the class with other appropriate behaviors and responses.

- adult will support the affected student by giving the words to speak in the situation
- adult will support disruptive student with other options to express and build self-regulation skills

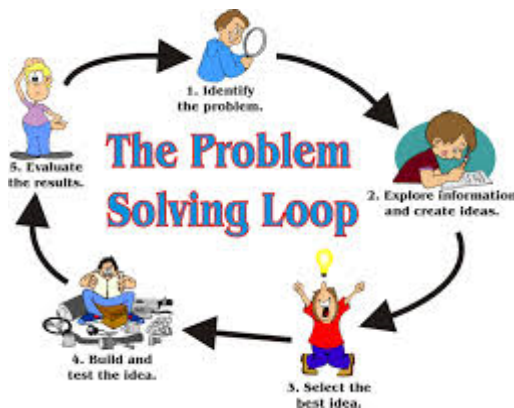
Step 4: Administration and parents of students involved will be informed as necessary

DOCUMENTATION OF BEHAVIORS BY TEACHER- informal in a binder/notebook with a page for each student. Must include date, time, behavior

Possible Consequences:

The classroom teacher will unilaterally assign one or more of the following consequences:

- Writing out virtues that were necessary to use in the situation
- Giving back to the school through an adult supervised work session before, during or after school
- Verbal apology
- Written apology
- Restriction or loss of privilege
- Informal support of discussion and problem solving
- Reverse recess
- Partial time in from recess



Level 2

When an adult notices a repeated pattern from level 1 offenses continuing or a student is too disruptive to remain in class, the adult will write up a referral and send the student to the administrative director. An investigation of the situation will occur and disciplinary actions will be based on information gathered.

Behaviors include but are not limited to:

- biting, hair pulling, kicking, pushing, hitting (Grades 1-4) choking delete
- misuse of school property that harm others
- repeated vulgar or inappropriate language

- leaving supervised area without permission

Procedure

Step 1: If another student is affected by behavior, the adult will check on that child first.

Step 2: The adult will approach the disruptive behavior with a calm, neutral demeanor, and set limits to keep other students safe.

Step 3: Redirect the disruptive student to a safe space or activity

Step 4: The adult will redirect or use it as a teachable moment in the class with other appropriate behaviors and responses.

- adult will support the affected student by giving the words to speak in the situation
- adult will support disruptive student with other options to express and build self-regulation skills

Step 5: If behavior continues, adult may ask for support from administration to determine next steps

Step 6: Parents of students involved will be informed and an incident report will be written and submitted to administration

Possible Consequences:

The adult and administrative director will together determine one or more of the following consequences and will document the incident and consequence and send a copy home to the parent and to the administrative director. In addition to level one consequences.

- Giving back to the school through an adult supervised work session before, during or after school
- Restriction or loss of privilege
- Reverse recess
- Partial time in from recess
- Place student in another approved classroom
- Send a child home
- Set up a meeting with parents to discuss an action plan
- Develop a self regulation plan to support student building skills

Level 3

Behaviors include but are not limited to:

- Leaving campus without permission
- Emotional/physical/sexual harassment, intimidation
- Verbal or written display of ethnic, racial or gender slurs
- Threatening to cause damage to a student, employee or property of any person attending school
- Use or display of drug or sexual symbols, words, gestures
- Presenting threat to self or others (verbal or written)
- Possession or distribution pornographic materials or conducting searches on the internet*
- Destruction of school property
- Physical assault biting, hair pulling, kicking, pushing, hitting (Grade 5-8)
- Theft

Procedure

Step 1: The student will be sent to the office

Step 2: The employee who witnessed the behavior will write a discipline referral including facts of what was observed and heard

Step 3: Administration will investigate and decide on disciplinary action.

Step 4: Parents and administration (possibly the student) will meet prior to the student returning to campus

Possible Consequences:

- Depending on the severity of the incident the student could be assigned a suspension anywhere from 1-10 days
- Participate in a restorative justice circle
- Community service hours
- Research project and presentation

Level 4

Behaviors include but are not limited to:

- Possession or use of forbidden weapons*
- Endangerment through use of fire alarm, 911 call or bomb threat*
- Sexual misconduct or assault*
- Premeditated physical assault*
- Aggravated assault or assault on employee*
- Arson*
- Possession, use or distribution of explosive devices*
- Possession or use of drugs, alcohol, tobacco, paraphernalia, vaping items*
- Being under the influence of illegal drugs, alcohol, marijuana products including vaping and e-cigarettes
- Hazing

*Violate ARS Sec 13-3620 and will be reported to the proper authorities

Possible Consequences:

Any violation in level 4 will result in an automatic recommendation by the Administrative Director to the School Board for expulsion. A formal hearing will be conducted by the School Board to determine if the student will be expelled from the Desert Star Community School.

Suspension or Expulsion Procedure

Suspension for ten days or less

The Administrative Director may suspend any student for up to 10 school days for serious cause, including, but not limited to the following: defiance, verbal abuse, disruptive/violent/threatening behavior, destruction of property, excessive tardies, and truancy. The school officials involved will create a report for the parent/guardian.

Step 1:

The student will receive a notice, written or oral, of the reason for the suspension and evidence the school authorities have of the alleged misconduct.

Step 2: After having received the notice, the student will be asked for an explanation of the situation. The Administrative Director shall make reasonable efforts to verify facts and statements prior to making a decision.

Step 3:

Provided that a written record of the action taken is kept on file, the Administrative Director may

- Suspend the student for up to ten days
- Choose other disciplinary alternatives
- Exonerate the student
- Require suspension for the student for ten days pending a recommendation that the student be placed on longer term suspension or expulsion

Step 4:

When suspension is involved a parent or legal guardian must be notified prior to the student leaving campus. If no parent or legal guardian contact can be made, the student may be isolated until dismissal time and then given a written message to the parents.

Step 5:

A letter to the parents will be written within a reasonable time to explain the terms (including the possibility that a long-term suspension and/or expulsion is being recommended) and reasons for the decision. There will also be a request to meet with them to solicit their help.

No appeal is available for a short-term suspension

Suspension over 10 school days and expulsion

The Administrative Director may recommend suspension for over 10 days and/or expulsion of a student for serious cause.

Any expulsions of students in K-4 must comply with sections 15-843 subsection K.

Step 1: The parent will be provided with a copy of DSCS's discipline policies/procedures, meet with the Administrative Director and other staff prior to submitting the expulsion recommendation to the Board of Directors.

Step 2: A formal letter to the responsible parent or guardian will be mailed by certified mail with return receipt requested or delivered by hand (with a witness present) at least five working days prior to the formal hearing. A copy of this letter will remain on file and include the following:

- A statement of the charges and the rule or regulation violated
- The extent of punishment to be considered
- Date, time and place of formal hearing
- A designation of the School's witnesses
- That the student may present witnesses
- If a hearing officer has been appointed and the name of the hearing officer
- The right of the parents or guardians to indicate their objection to the decision to hold the hearing in executive session**

**Objections must be made in writing to the Board or the hearing officer

Step 3: A formal hearing will be held, during which the student and parent or legal guardian will be informed of the following rights:

- When a parent or legal guardian has disagreed that the hearing should be held in executive session, it shall be held in an open meeting unless:
 - If only one student is subject to the proposed action, and disagreement exists between the student's parents or legal guardians. The Board or hearing officer will consult with parents or legal guardians. Then Board or hearing officer shall decide in executive session whether or not the hearing will be held in executive session
 - If more than one student is subject to the proposed action and disagreement exists between the parents of different students, then separate hearings shall be held
- Student is entitled to a statement of the charges and the rules or regulations violated
 - Student may be represented by counsel, without prejudice
 - Student may present witnesses
 - Student or counsel may cross-examine the witnesses presented by School
 - Either the hearing must be recorded on tape or an official transcript must be kept in some other manner. In addition, parents are allowed to record the hearing at their own expense
 - The burden of proof of the offense lies with the School
 - The School has the right to cross-examine witnesses, and may be represented by an attorney

Step 4: The decision will be communicated to parents or legal guardians

Appeal Process

- If the conclusion of a **long-term suspension** is reached, the decision may be appealed to the Board.

Step 1: The student or the parent(s) of the student must deliver a letter to the Administrative Director directed to the Board within five days after receiving written notice of suspension. The letter must describe in detail any objections to the hearing or the decision rendered.

Step 2: The appeal to the Board will be on record of the hearing held by the hearing officer. If the Board determines that the student was not afforded due process rights or that this policy was not followed in all substantive respects, the student shall be given another hearing.

Step 3: A hearing will be held and if the Board determines that the punishment was not reasonable, they may modify it. The decision of the Board is final.

- If the conclusion of an **expulsion** is reached, the decision may be appealed to the Board.

Step 1: Upon conclusion of the hearing by the hearing officer, the decision may be appealed to the Board at the time the Board considers the recommendation for expulsion

Step 2: A formal letter to the responsible parent or guardian will be mailed by certified mail with return receipt requested or delivered by hand (with a witness present) indicating the recommendation that will be made by the Board. A copy of this letter will remain on file and the letter should explain:

- The time and place the Board meeting at which the recommendation will be made
- That the recommendation may be appealed at the time the recommendation is made to the Board
- The appeal shall be in writing delivered to the Administrative Director prior to the time of the Board meeting
- The written appeal shall indicate a spokesperson on behalf of the student
- The spokesperson will be given time to speak to the Board on the appeal

Upon conclusion of the hearing on expulsion by the Board, the decision of the Board is final.

The Board of Directors has the right to deny admission of a student who has been expelled from another school and to deny readmission of a student previously expelled from DSCS.

DSCS will meet all requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the IDEA, and State laws regarding disciplining of students with disabilities.

Special Education Students

When a special education student engages in misconduct that could result in suspension or expulsion, Desert Star shall follow the State Board of Education rules governing suspension and expulsion of special education students. Pursuant to the rules, if the misconduct is not a manifestation of the student's disability, standard school discipline procedures shall apply.

Anti-Bullying

HB2368 was signed into law and became effective Aug. 12, 2005. ARS 15-341(A)(40) requires all public school governing boards “to adopt and enforce procedures that prohibit the harassment, bullying and intimidation of pupils on school grounds, school property, school buses, school bus stops and at school-sponsored events and activities.”

The purpose of the Desert Star Community School anti-bullying policy is to outline our community’s responsibilities as noted below as staff, faculty, students, parents/guardians, and families to eliminate social, emotional, and physical intimidation and bullying in any form within the Desert Star community.



Faculty and Staff Responsibilities

- Incorporate lessons, language and role modeling as outlined in the school adopted Virtues Project, HeartMath, and other character building programs
- Be a positive role model in word and action at all times
- Work to remove opportunities for bullying and/or harassment through active supervision at all times
- Be observant of signs of distress or suspected incidents of bullying and/or harassment
- Intervene appropriately when acts of bullying and/or harassment are suspected or observed
- Report suspected or observed incidents of bullying and/or harassment to the appropriate administrator, faculty/staff member, and to parent/guardian
- Complete documentation when appropriate
- Work to build, support and maintain a bully-free campus environment

Student Responsibilities

- Treat others with respect, kindness, and courtesy
- Be aware of how your words and actions affect others
- Uphold the Desert Star anti-bullying policy
- Refrain from participating in acts of bullying and/or harassment
- Report suspected or observed acts of bullying and/or harassment to the appropriate administrator, faculty/staff member, and/or parent/guardian
- Work to build, support and maintain a bully-free school environment

Parent Responsibilities

In order for a discipline program to be consistent and effective, parents and guardians are expected to support teachers and administrators.

- Be a positive role model in work and action at all times while on the Desert Star campus, on school trips or at school sponsored events
- Demonstrate respect and courtesy in all Desert Star relationships
- Discuss and clarify the policy with your child/children
- Take an active interest in your child's social relationships and friendships
- Watch for signs of distress in your child or sudden changes in their behavior or demeanor. Any of these may indicate a potential problem
- Communicate with Desert Star administrators, faculty/staff members about suspected, observed, or reported incidents of bullying and/or harassment
- Commit to working with Desert Star personnel when your child is involved in a bullying and/or harassment incident



Students are prohibited from bullying on school grounds, school property, school buses, at school bus stops, at school sponsored events and activities, and through the use of electronic technology or electronic communication equipment on school computers, networks, forums, phones, or mailing lists.

Disciplinary action may result for bullying which occurs outside of the school and the school day when such bullying results in a substantial physical, mental or emotional negative effect on the victim while on school grounds, school property, school buses, at school bus stops, at school sponsored events and activities or when such act(s) interfere with the authority of the school system to maintain safety and order. Suspected violations of the law may be reported to local law enforcement.

Reporting Bullying Behaviors, including Sexual Harassment, Abuse and Molestation

Any student, employee, volunteer or school community member who believes he or she has been the victim of any form of bullying or sexual harassment by another student, employee, volunteer or school community member should report such incident to the school administration. If the school administrator is the alleged perpetrator of the incident or incidents, then the report should be made to a member of the Board of Directors.

Bullying

Bullying is defined as an intentional, targeted, aggressive behavior among individuals or groups that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. It is when individuals or groups engage in any form of behavior to intimidate, harass, embarrass, or harm another person or to cause submission. Most students with bullying behaviors single out people who stand out in some way. Almost any quality (positive or negative) can become the focus of attention. It can be manifested through written, verbal, physical, or emotional means and may occur in a variety of forms including, but not limited to:

Physical –pushing, throwing objects, hitting, unwanted touch, spitting, tripping, biting, pinching, disrespectful actions etc.

Verbal –threats, racist/sexual comments, taunting, insult, inappropriate language, name calling, cruel jokes, disrespectful comments towards students or adults, lying, etc.

Social/Relational – peer pressure, gossip, harassment, rumors, exposure to social exclusion or ostracism, ignoring, avoiding, shunning, hurting feelings, creating embarrassment, shaming etc.

Criminal Behavior–cyber bullying (social networking (ie.Facebook), etc., instant messaging, texting/sexting, blogging, etc.); vandalizing school property, taking and distributing inappropriate pictures, stealing personal belongings.

Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullying is, but not limited to, any act of bullying committed by use of electronic technology or electronic communication devices, including telephonic devices, social networking and other Internet communications, on school computers, networks, forums and mailing lists, or other school-owned property, and by means of an individual's personal electronic media and equipment.



Harassment

Harassment is intentional behavior by a student or group of students that is disturbing or threatening to another student or group of students. Intentional behaviors that characterize harassment include, but are not limited to, stalking, hazing, social exclusion, name calling, unwanted physical contact and unwelcome verbal or written comments, photographs and graphics. Harassment may be related, but not limited to, race, religious orientation, sexual preference, cultural background, economic status, size or personal appearance. Harassing behaviors can be direct or indirect and by use of social media.

Intimidation

Intimidation is intentional behavior by a student or group of students that places another student or group of students in fear of harm to person or property. Intimidation can be manifested emotionally or physically, either directly or indirectly, and by use of social media.

A student who threatens to cause physical injury or serious damage to property, or intimidates another person, by word or conduct, is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor. Threatening to commit any physical injury to a school employee or student; threatening to damage any school property, school employee's property, or student property may result in any or all of the following: Report to the police, suspension or expulsion. All incidents will be reviewed and handled on a case-by-case basis and will include review protections afforded by special education law for special education students.



Consideration of Child Development

In grades K-4, child development plays a crucial role in understanding and addressing bullying. Here are some key points about child development and bullying in this age group:

1. **Social Skills Development:** Children in grades K-4 are in the early stages of developing social skills such as empathy, cooperation, and conflict resolution. A lack of these skills or an inability to regulate emotions effectively can be perceived as bullying behavior.
2. **Power Imbalance:** Bullying often involves a power imbalance, where the bully perceives themselves as having more power or control over the victim. In elementary school settings, this power dynamic can be influenced by factors such as physical size, social status, or verbal assertiveness.
3. **Peer Relationships:** Children in these grades are forming important peer relationships and social skills. Positive peer relationships and a supportive social environment can serve as protective factors.
4. **Awareness and Intervention:** It's essential for educators, parents, and caregivers to be aware of peer dynamics to intervene early. Teaching children about empathy, kindness, and respectful communication can help build and promote positive social interactions.
5. **Emotional Development:** Children in grades K-4 are also developing emotionally, learning to identify and manage their feelings.
6. **School Climate:** The overall school climate, including policies, interventions, and support systems, plays a crucial role in supporting all students. Creating a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment encourages positive behavior.

Understanding child development in grades K-4 is key to fostering healthy social and emotional development and creating a positive school environment for all students.

Consequences for bullying and/or harassment

May include, but are not limited to:

- ❖ Meeting with administrator and/or appropriate school personnel
- ❖ Mediation
- ❖ Removal from classroom, playground, and/or classroom activities
- ❖ Individual behavior plans/contracts
- ❖ Disciplinary hearing
- ❖ Short term suspension
- ❖ Long term suspension
- ❖ Expulsion
- ❖ All consequences are subject to administrative discretion and appropriate developmental stages.
- ❖ All rules apply to students while on school grounds and during school sponsored activities on/off campus

Academic Policy

Desert Star Community School (DSCS) bases its curriculum on the needs and capacities of the developing child as this is understood in Waldorf Education. We strive to bring age appropriate subject matter to students using styles of teaching suitable to their developmental stages. We also strive to challenge the children while at the same time not rushing them into some aspects of learning too soon.

The academic achievement of the students at DSCS is assessed by teachers through daily observations, portfolio assessment, quizzes, tests, and standardized state tests. The social, emotional, and physical health of the children is also of prime importance to the teachers, and every effort is made to give the children the opportunity to grow and develop in these areas. We also recognize that a vibrant artistic and musical experience at school supports creativity, intellectual growth, and emotional health.

As a charter school in the state of Arizona, the teachers and staff of DSCS are also cognizant of state requirements and state standards. Some components of the Waldorf approach to education should not and need not be compromised. Other aspects may be modified in order to responsibly prepare the students for the state tests.

Education at Desert Star Community School, as our name implies, is a joint effort of teachers, students and parents. Parents will support a healthy childhood and educational experience by providing the following:

- Proper nutrition • Adequate sleep
- Minimal media
- Quiet time
- Time in nature
- Chores at home
- Appropriate dress
- Cultivation of reverence
- Support of your child's education • Support of the class community

Regular attendance and timely arrival at school each morning also give the students the vital support that they need to be successful.

Academic Expectations and Academic Probation

In order to enable the students to achieve their very best, DSCS holds high standards of academic achievement. When students fail to meet these standards, we seek to put in place support systems that will allow them to succeed.

When academic achievement of students in grades 2 -5 falls below the category we designate on the report card as “approaching standards” or falls below a grade of C for students in grades 6-8, the student will be placed on a “probationary warning” status. This status could also include a student who is not completing class work and/or homework.

Probationary Warning Status

Students given a “probationary warning” status will be offered an academic improvement plan. This plan will outline supportive steps to help the student meet the academic goals set by the teacher. This plan will be developed by the class teacher in coordination with the administration. The student and parents will meet with the class teacher to review and agree to the improvement plan.

The following steps may be outlined in an improvement plan:

- Improved student attendance

- Completion of classroom assignments
- Participation in class
- Supervision of homework by the parents
- Participation in after school tutorials

When the student has met the goals of an improvement plan, a “letter of achievement” will be written by the class teacher. This letter will be attached to the improvement plan and placed in the student’s file.

Homework Policy

Our homework policy is based on grades. Grades K-8 we ask that a student reads or is read to for 15 minutes a night. The goal is to encourage the love for reading within the child. Other homework for grades 4-8 are at teacher discretion. The amount of homework assigned to students varies by grade. Parent involvement in homework should be kept to a minimum. Teachers will establish and communicate their homework policy to the parents of your students. Many students have a tremendous amount of home responsibilities which many need to be considered.

Grade Matriculation

Since the Waldorf curriculum addresses not only the intellectual needs of the growing children but also seeks to meet their physical and emotional needs, every attempt is made to place students entering the school in classes with children of similar ages. Our striving as a school is to give each student the best possible chance for success in our educational setting.

There are times when a student’s grade placement might come under review. Retaining a child is given the greatest consideration by the class teacher, faculty, and parents. At the center of this discussion is what is in the best interests of the child.

Factors that will be considered in any such discussion are:

- Student attendance (State law sets minimum attendance requirements)
 - Academic performance
 - Consideration of the student within the normative developmental picture •
- Student success with adaptive learning supports offered by the school

When the question of promotion arises, a formal parent conference will be held with the class teacher. A letter summarizing issues addressed in that meeting will be written by the class teacher. The class teacher and parent will agree on an “assessment period.” A student’s ability to meet clearly defined benchmarks will be considered by the class teacher and the administration. Promotion will be determined by the class teacher and the administration.

Field Trip Policy

All field trips must be specifically approved, in advance by administration. Before any student is taken from the school grounds on a field trip, permission must be obtained from the parents or legal guardian. Teachers may sometimes request items students must bring on the field trip like sunscreen etc. The school may require students to pay all or part of any admission fees, meals, or other expenses.

Field Trip Approval Protocol

1. When planning a field trip, teachers must check in with the office to verify the date is available without any conflict with other school activities. Requests for field trips should be approved at a minimum 2 weeks in advance from the scheduled day of departure.
2. Once the date is confirmed, teachers are to complete the field trip form.
3. The field trip form is then approved and signed by the Administrator. Permission request is sent for parental permission.
4. Teachers are to collect and verify that they have obtained ALL student permission forms prior to leaving on trip. A student missing a form will remain at school.
5. All volunteers need to check into the office and complete the field trip volunteer form prior to departure. If a volunteer does not have a fingerprint card on file, they may not attend the field trip. A volunteer may not bring any other person(s) with them on any field trip.
6. Teachers may not bring their own children or allow any siblings of their students on the field trip.

Field Trip Driver Protocol

1. All drivers (including teachers) must check into the office on the day of the field trip.
2. The following items will be verified:
 - a. A valid IVP fingerprint card is on file in the office.
 - b. A copy of a valid driver's license is on file in the office.
 - c. A copy of current automobile insurance is on file in the office.
3. All drivers will complete and sign the field trip volunteer form prior to departure.

No adult may attend a field trip unless a fingerprint clearance has been completed at DSCS through DPS.
NO EXCEPTIONS.

Media Policy

In our society, the media in all its forms (T.V., movies, video games, computers, computer games, portable CD players, etc.) is an ever-growing presence in our lives. We as educators and parents face the difficult choice of deciding how much to let the various media into our lives and how to use them wisely.

With growing children, this question becomes even more urgent. Current research increasingly points to a direct adverse effect on brain development from excessive exposure to media. In schools as well as the home, we are confronted by many forms of attention deficit disorders and other learning disabilities. We also see a fading of the powers of imagination and wonder. Young children are by nature “doers.” The media exposes children to an artificial world that allows no engagement of their own will and imagination. This evokes unnatural responses in a child’s being and stunts the seeds of human development. Not only is the nature of the media foreign and directly harmful to the child’s developing brain and inner being, the content of most television programs, video games and movies is glaring in its disregard for what childhood really is meant to be. Because of this, exposure to the media works at cross purposes with what Waldorf education aims to bring.

Our recommended guidelines regarding media use are as follows:

1. For grades K – 5: No television, video games or movies during the school week; minimal parent-directed media use on weekends and during vacations.
2. For grade 6-8: No television or video games in the morning before school; minimal parent-directed media use during the school week; parental involvement in determining appropriate media and computer use choices at all other times.

Playground Rules

The following guidelines apply generally to all play areas. More specific guidelines may be provided by on duty teachers or supervision staff.

Supervision

1. A minimum of 1 staff person per class is to be on duty at all times on the playground during school hour recess periods. Each class teacher will be assigned a post.
2. No students are to be sent out before an adult is on duty.
3. People other than DSCS staff and approved volunteers are not allowed on the playground during school hours, unless they are on tour or have been granted permission from the administration.
4. The teachers on duty are to be vigilant in making sure only appropriate equipment is being used and that it is being used in the proper way.
5. Teachers on duty need to encourage the most efficient use of playground space for all users and their respective activities and may ask groups to adjust, as needed, for the safety and fairness of all.
6. Teachers and yard supervisors will guide appropriate play among age groups with an eye to suitability, roughness, etc. If teachers/supervisors see something that makes them uncomfortable – whether or not it falls within general guidelines – they will confer with that student’s class teacher, if the teacher is present. If the teacher is not present, the teacher/supervisor on duty will intervene and discuss the incident with the class teacher later on.

Equipment and Play Structures

1. A variety of sports and play equipment may be used such as jump ropes, hula hoops, etc. Playground balls, basketballs and footballs may be used in the field/basketball court area only. Regular baseball bats and hard baseballs present safety concerns and are not allowed.
2. Equipment may be brought from home if it is deemed acceptable by the class teacher. Students who bring equipment should be advised that loss or breakage is not the responsibility of the school.
3. Equipment needs to be brought in at the end of recess by the students who used it and put into its designated storage space.
4. Ropes may be used as jump ropes ONLY and may not be tied from branches in trees or play structures.
5. No skateboarding is allowed on school property during school hours.
6. No climbing on fences, trees or play structures is allowed.
7. Sticks are not allowed to be used and will be removed from the playground area if there are problems.
8. Shoving, pushing, tackling, or use of excessive force is not allowed.
9. Students are not allowed to throw objects such as stones, sticks, dirt clods, or sand on the school grounds.
10. Physical contact with a student who is hanging from any climbing bar is not allowed.
11. No riding on the backs or shoulders of other students is allowed.
12. Weaving between moving swings is prohibited.
13. No walking on see-saws without adult supervision and permission.
14. Any student identified as having damaged school property will participate in the restoration or replacement process.

Team Games

1. Participation in team games such as soccer requires all students to demonstrate good sportsmanship, which means playing cooperatively, fairly, and safely and communicating respectfully. Students who cannot meet this standard may be required to sit out.
2. The general rule is to encourage inclusive play amongst the various grades with age appropriate games.
3. There may be a limited number of players for certain games. Additional students who want to play should be allowed to rotate in. The teacher on duty needs to support the students in maintaining a fair method for accomplishing this.
4. Clear boundaries need to be established for team games. The on-duty teacher may need to help

establish and maintain these. Traffic cones can be obtained from the PE teacher for this purpose.

Supervision After School

After school hours, supervision of students is the responsibility of parents. It is the school's expectation that parents ensure that their children are following the playground rules and remain in their general eyesight while on campus. Students may never be in any of the classrooms or office unless an adult accompanies them.

Pathway of Communication

Addressing parent concerns is a high priority at Desert Star and all concerns will receive prompt and thoughtful attention. The health and harmony of our school community depends on all parties taking a responsible and constructive approach to raising and resolving concerns. When raising a concern, it is essential to speak directly to the person(s) involved. Speaking directly may be difficult but it is the most effective way to resolve a concern. When you go directly to the person involved and let them know of your concern you can work together to find a solution. It is not appropriate to discuss your concerns with others in the community before you speak directly with those involved.

Before raising a concern, parents are encouraged to do the following:

- Take some time to reflect on the true nature of the concern. Is it a personal issue which may be better resolved outside of school or is it an issue that requires action within the school?
- If the concern raises strong emotions, take time to allow these emotions to subside so that it is possible to engage in a constructive discussion.
- If the concern involves existing school policies, take the time to understand these policies and their purpose.
- Come up with a proposed solution for the concern and consider how this solution may affect all parties involved.

Concerns regarding teacher issues

1. Speak directly to your child's teacher and try to find resolution at this level. If you are unable to find resolution after speaking to the teacher, the next step is:
2. Call the office and make an appointment to speak with the Administrator.
3. All approaches to resolving concerns and conflicts, including mediation, will be considered, if needed.

Concerns regarding classroom & student issues

1. Speak directly to your child's teacher and try to find resolution at this level. If you are unable to find resolution after speaking to the teacher
2. If you are unable to find resolution after speaking to the teacher, set up a meeting with the teacher and the Administrator.
3. All approaches to resolving concerns and conflicts, including mediation, will be considered, if needed.

Concerns regarding bus issues

1. Call the office and make an appointment with the Administrator.
2. All approaches to resolving concerns and conflicts, including mediation, will be considered, if needed.

For concerns regarding school operations and policies it is best to contact the office and make an appointment with administration.

School Organization

Parents of students at Desert Star Community School are given the opportunity to grow with their children in a unique educational environment. Parent participation is an essential and integral part of a child's educational experience and serves to unify families and create a strong sense of community. Many of the activities and programs at Desert Star rely on the skill and generosity of parents. For this reason, it is vital to the success of the school that families actively participate in various school events and activities. The following are the main bodies of the school, their responsibilities and how you can become involved.

Board of Directors

Desert Star Community School has a Board of Directors that is responsible for deciding legal, financial, personnel, and policy issues of the school. The Board consists of parents, faculty, staff and other community members, who serve 2-year, staggered terms. The bylaws of the Board are available in the school office. Board meetings are held monthly or more often if necessary, and agendas are posted on the school office window at least 24 hours before a Board meeting. If you would like a Board meeting agenda emailed to you before each meeting, please contact a Board member. Board meetings are public meetings and all are welcome to attend. The entire school community votes to fill open Board seats every fall. Those interested in running for open Board seats are welcome and invited to contact the Board. There is a procedure in place for the petitioning for the removal of a Board member where there is just cause.

Administration

Administration is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the school, supervises the teachers, works to ensure compliance with State requirements, and is available to assist parents with questions or concerns. The Office Coordinator supports the work of the administration with daily office routines. Administration meets regularly with staff to discuss upcoming events and any concerns brought forward.

Parent Involvement

Parent Volunteers

It is requested that all families contribute a minimum of 50 hours per year in service to the school, that's about one hour per week of school. To volunteer in the classroom, please contact your child's teacher. Volunteers must sign in and out at the office. Please log your volunteer hours into ParentSquare. If you are unable to volunteer, you may choose to make a financial contribution in support of the school. Some ways to help are:

- Campus care
- Field Trips
- Plays
- Festivals
- Nature walks
- Weekly cleaning of classrooms (speak with class teachers for specific needs)
- Childcare during school meetings

Please note that parent volunteers who are directly supervised and within eyesight of a teacher will not need an IVP fingerprint card. Those who are alone with students in a classroom, the playground, or on a field trip will be required to obtain an IVP fingerprint clearance.

Communication Builds Community

Desert Star Community School uses the following methods to communicate and to strengthen our community.

Parent/Teacher Conferences & Conversations

We have regularly scheduled dates throughout the school year for parent/teacher conferences. There may be other times that teacher or parent would like to share observations with respect to a child's participation in our program. At such times, a parent/teacher conversation may be arranged by appointment. All teachers are available for parent conferences during the school week. Contact individual class teachers for an appointment. Please do not engage your class teacher in a lengthy conversation when children are present or directly before or after school. It is important for teachers to keep their focus on the students before and during the school day.

ParentSquare

Notices about upcoming events, classroom activities, and committee/faculty/Board information posted on the website and ParentSquare on a regular basis to keep parents up-to-date and involved.

Desert Star School Website

Our website is another way to stay up to date with what is going on in our school community. We are working to update our website regularly with important information for parents. Please check it as often as you can.

Class Meetings

Each class teacher will schedule a minimum of three class meetings throughout the year. It is extremely important for each family to be represented at these meetings. Content may include:

- Outline of the year
- Daily schedule
- Characterization of the child at this age
- Discussion of the current block
- Social issues
- Questions and concerns from parents

These meetings help to cultivate the culture of your child's class with teachers and parents working together.

Parent Behavior Guidelines

Any person on the school campus is expected to uphold the behavior expectations outlined in the Behavior Policy. In addition, parents must follow these guidelines when interacting with students on campus or during any school sponsored activity, (on or off campus):

1. We are a drug and smoke free campus. Drugs, alcohol and tobacco may not be consumed on campus or in the presence of students, including on field trips.
2. It is expected that everyone interacting with students use appropriate language at all times. Profanity is not permitted.
3. Any person chaperoning a field trip or school activity is under the direct supervision of the class teacher. Make sure you have a clear understanding of this policy and the teacher's expectation of you in this role. If you are not functioning in an official chaperone or supervision capacity, do not take it upon yourself to discipline any student.
4. Be aware of the conversations you are engaged in around the children. For example, it is not appropriate to discuss a concern about a teacher or other staff member in the presence of students. This also includes negative "parking lot" talk.
5. Teachers are on campus to teach our students. Please respect their work. Parents are encouraged to visit and participate in classroom activities; however, these visits must be pre-scheduled with the teacher and/or the office. All parents must sign in at the office and get a name tag. Parent guidelines for visiting classrooms will be given.
6. We ask that you follow the guidelines set forth in the Nutrition Guidelines section of this handbook when contributing food or drinks to a school activity, including class trips. The class teacher should approve any food or drink that you plan to bring.

Recommendations to Support Learning

- Have children arrive on time for school
- Read with your children every day for 20 minutes
- Do mental math problems with your children
- Have a nighttime routine and have children get adequate sleep
- Feed your children nutritional meals, especially breakfast
- Allow children to be independent and use their acquired skills
- Be engaged and ask children about their homework and review the homework is complete
- Limit exposure to electronics

Student Assessment

Desert Star Community School uses many assessment tools to monitor the growth and development of students. These include:

- Teacher observation (daily interaction that allows teachers to see where students excel, where they are challenged, what works, what does not, not only academically, but also socially and artistically)
- Portfolio assessment (analysis of a collection of student's work over time which shows the level of progress being made)
- Informal tools (quizzes, activities, etc. that teachers make or find to help determine how well students are grasping material being presented in class or how they are progressing with basic language and mathematical skills)
- State and federally mandated Standardized tests.
- Benchmark tests three times a year in ELA and Math

These assessments help teachers continually adjust to meet the individual needs of students and also allow Desert Star to monitor how well we as a school are meeting our goal of providing an exceptional learning environment. Throughout the year, parents are informed of student growth in the following ways:

1. Informal conversation (your child's teacher will let you know how and when to contact him or her to touch base as to how your child is doing)
2. Parent evenings
3. Twice a year parent/teacher conferences
4. Mid-year written progress report
5. End-of-the-year progress report

Standardized Testing

As a charter school, Desert Star is required to administer standardized tests annually. Currently, students in grades 3 through 8 are being tested per Arizona Department of Education guidelines. In addition to meeting state requirements, these tests can be a valuable tool to the school, when viewed in light of a multi-faceted approach to assessment. Our expectation is that the students will approach their experience of standardized testing in the same joyful, confident way that they approach any other aspect of their school life.

Parental Rights

Child Find

All Public agencies must have in place an effective method to locate and identify children birth through 21 years of age who may have delays or disabilities and may require an evaluation in order to receive needed early intervention support or special education services. For complete information on regulations of Child Find, you may review the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which is located in the Desert Star Community School office.

A.R.S. § 1-183 Right to Know Teacher Qualifications

Federal law allows you to ask for certain information about your child's classroom teacher. You have the right to know the following:

- Whether the Arizona Department of Education has licensed or qualified the teacher for the grades and subjects he or she teaches.
- Whether the Arizona Department of Education has decided that the teacher can teach in a classroom without being licensed or qualified under state regulations because of special circumstances.
- The teacher's college major, whether the teacher has any advanced degrees and, if so, the subject of the degrees.
- Teachers' aides' or similar paraprofessionals' qualifications.

You may request any of the above information from our office and it will be given to you in a timely manner.

A.R.S. § 1-601 – Parents' rights protected

A. The liberty of parents to direct the upbringing, education, health care and mental health of their children is a fundamental right. Equity for all students to achieve their full potential.

B. This state, any political subdivision of this state or any other governmental entity shall not infringe on these rights without demonstrating that the compelling governmental interest as applied to the child involved is of the highest order, is narrowly tailored and is not otherwise served by a less restrictive means.

A.R.S. § 1-602 – Parents' bill of rights; definition

A. All parental rights are reserved to a parent of a minor child without obstruction or interference from this state, any political subdivision of this state, any other governmental entity or any other institution, including:

1. The right to direct the education of the minor child.
2. All rights of parents identified in title 15, including the right to access and review all records relating to the minor child.
3. The right to direct the upbringing of the minor child.
4. The right to direct the moral or religious training of the minor child.
5. The right to make health care decisions for the minor child, including rights pursuant to sections 15-873, 36-2271 and 36-2272, unless otherwise prohibited by law.
6. The right to access and review all medical records of the minor child unless otherwise

prohibited by law or the parent is the subject of an investigation of a crime committed against the minor child and a law enforcement official requests that the information not be released.

7. The right to consent in writing before a biometric scan of the minor child is made pursuant to section 15-109.

8. The right to consent in writing before any record of the minor child's blood or deoxyribonucleic acid is created, stored or shared, except as required by section 36-694, or before any genetic testing is conducted on the minor child pursuant to section 12-2803 unless authorized pursuant to section 13-610 or a court order.

9. The right to consent in writing before the state or any of its political subdivisions makes a video or voice recording of the minor child, unless the video or voice recording is made during or as a part of a court proceeding, by law enforcement officers during or as part of a law enforcement investigation, during or as part of an interview in a criminal or child safety services investigation or to be used solely for any of the following:

- (a) Safety demonstrations, including the maintenance of order and discipline in the common areas of a school or on pupil transportation vehicles.
- (b) A purpose related to a legitimate academic or extracurricular activity.
- (c) A purpose related to regular classroom instruction.
- (d) Security or surveillance of buildings or grounds.
- (e) A photo identification card.

10. The right to be notified promptly if an employee of this state, any political subdivision of this state, any other governmental entity or any other institution suspects that a criminal offense has been committed against the minor child by someone other than a parent, unless the incident has first been reported to law enforcement and notification of the parent would impede a law enforcement or child safety services investigation. This paragraph does not create any new obligation for school districts and charter schools to report misconduct between students at school, such as fighting or aggressive play, that is routinely addressed as a student disciplinary matter by the school.

11. The right to obtain information about a child safety services investigation involving the parent pursuant to section 8-807.

B. This section does not authorize or allow a parent to engage in conduct that is unlawful or to abuse or neglect a child in violation of the laws of this state. This section does not prohibit courts, law enforcement officers or employees of a government agency responsible for child welfare from acting in their official capacity within the scope of their authority. This section does not prohibit a court from issuing an order that is otherwise permitted by law.

C. Any attempt to encourage or coerce a minor child to withhold information from the child's parent shall be grounds for discipline of an employee of this state, any political subdivision of this state or any other governmental entity, except for law enforcement personnel.

D. Unless those rights have been legally waived or legally terminated, parents have inalienable rights that are more comprehensive than those listed in this section. This chapter does not prescribe all rights of parents. Unless otherwise required by law, the rights of parents of minor children shall not be limited or denied.

E. For the purposes of this section, "parent" means the natural or adoptive parent or legal guardian of a minor child.

A.R.S. § 15-102 – Parental involvement in the school; definition

A. The governing board, in consultation with parents, teachers and administrators, shall develop and adopt a policy to promote the involvement of parents and guardians of children enrolled in the schools within the school district, including:

1. A plan for parent participation in the schools that is designed to improve parent and teacher cooperation in such areas as homework, attendance and discipline. The plan shall provide for the administration of a parent-teacher satisfaction survey.
2. Procedures by which parents may learn about the course of study for their children and review learning materials, including the source of any supplemental educational materials.
3. Procedures by which parents who object to any learning material or activity on the basis that it is harmful may withdraw their children from the activity or from the class or program in which the material is used. Objection to a learning material or activity on the basis that it is harmful includes objection to a material or activity because it questions beliefs or practices in sex, morality or religion.
4. If a school district offers any sex education curricula pursuant to section 15-711 or 15-716 or pursuant to any rules adopted by the state board of education, procedures to prohibit a school district from providing sex education instruction to a pupil unless the pupil's parent provides written permission for the child to participate in the sex education curricula.
5. Procedures by which parents will be notified in advance of and given the opportunity to withdraw their children from any instruction or presentations regarding sexuality in courses other than formal sex education curricula.
6. Procedures by which parents may learn about the nature and purpose of clubs and activities that are part of the school curriculum, extracurricular clubs and activities that have been approved by the school.
7. Procedures by which parents may learn about parental rights and responsibilities under the laws of this state, including the following:
 - (a) The right to opt into a sex education curriculum if one is provided by the school district.
 - (b) Open enrollment rights pursuant to section 15-816.01.
 - (c) The right to opt out of assignments pursuant to this section.

- (d) The right to opt out of immunizations pursuant to section 15-873.
- (e) The promotion requirements prescribed in section 15-701.
- (f) The minimum course of study and competency requirements for graduation from high school prescribed in section 15-701.01.
- (g) The right to opt out of instruction on the acquired immune deficiency syndrome pursuant to section 15-716.
- (h) The right to review test results pursuant to section 15-743.
- (i) The right to participate in gifted programs pursuant to section 15-779.01.
- (j) The right to access instructional materials pursuant to section 15-730.
- (k) The right to receive a school report card pursuant to section 15-746.
- (l) The attendance requirements prescribed in sections 15-802, 15-803 and 15- 821.
- (m) The right to public review of courses of study and textbooks pursuant to sections 15-721 and 15-722.
- (n) The right to be excused from school attendance for religious purposes pursuant to section 15-806.
- (o) Policies related to parental involvement pursuant to this section.
- (p) The right to seek membership on school councils pursuant to section 15-351.
- (q) Information about the student accountability information system as prescribed in section 15-1041.
- (r) The right to access the failing schools tutoring fund pursuant to section 15-241.

B. The policy adopted by the governing board pursuant to this section may also include the following components:

1. A plan by which parents will be made aware of the district's parental involvement policy and this section, including:
 - (a) Rights under the family educational rights and privacy act of 1974 (20 United States Code section 1232g) relating to access to children's official records.
 - (b) The parent's right to inspect the school district policies and curriculum.
2. Efforts to encourage the development of parenting skills.
3. The communication to parents of techniques designed to assist the child's learning experience in the home.
4. Efforts to encourage access to community and support services for children and families.
5. The promotion of communication between the school and parents concerning school programs and the academic progress of the parents' children.
6. Identifying opportunities for parents to participate in and support classroom instruction at the school.
7. Efforts to support, with appropriate training, parents as shared decision-makers and to encourage membership on school councils.
8. The recognition of the diversity of parents and the development of guidelines that promote widespread parental participation and involvement in the school at various levels.
9. The development of preparation programs and specialized courses for certificated employees and administrators that promote parental involvement.
10. The development of strategies and programmatic structures at schools to encourage and enable parents to participate actively in their children's education.

C. The governing board may adopt a policy to provide to parents the information required by this

section in an electronic form.

D. A parent shall submit a written request for information pursuant to this section during regular business hours to either the school principal at the school site or the superintendent of the school district at the office of the school district. Within ten days after receiving the request for information, the school principal or the superintendent of the school district shall either deliver the requested information to the parent or submit to the parent a written explanation of the reasons for the denial of the requested information. If the request for information is denied or the parent does not receive the requested information within fifteen days after submitting the request for information, the parent may submit a written request for the information to the school district governing board, which shall formally consider the request at the next scheduled public meeting of the governing board if the request can be properly noticed on the agenda. If the request cannot be properly noticed on the agenda, the governing board shall formally consider the request at the next subsequent public meeting of the governing board.

E. For the purposes of this section, "parent" means the natural or adoptive parent or legal guardian of a minor child.

A.R.S. § 15-110 – Rights of students at public educational institutions; limitations; definition

A. A public educational institution shall not discriminate against students or parents on the basis of a religious viewpoint or religious expression.

B. If an assignment requires a student's viewpoint to be expressed in coursework, artwork or other written or oral assignments, a public educational institution shall not penalize or reward a student on the basis of religious content or a religious viewpoint. In such an assignment, a student's academic work that expresses a religious viewpoint shall be evaluated based on ordinary academic standards of substance and relevance to the course curriculum or requirements of the coursework or assignment.

C. Students in public educational institutions may pray or engage in religious activities or religious expression before, during and after the school day in the same manner and to the same extent that students may engage in nonreligious activities or expression.

D. Students in public educational institutions may wear clothing, accessories and jewelry that display religious messages or religious symbols in the same manner and to the same extent that other types of clothing, accessories and jewelry that display messages or symbols are permitted.

E. This section shall not be construed to authorize this state or any of its political subdivisions to do either of the following:

1. Require any person to participate in prayer or in any other religious activity.
2. Violate the constitutional rights of any person.

F. This section shall not be construed to limit the authority of any public educational institution to do any of the following:

1. Maintain order and discipline on the campus of the public educational institution in a content and viewpoint neutral manner.
2. Protect the safety of students, employees and visitors of the public educational institution.
3. Adopt and enforce policies and procedures regarding student speech at school provided that the policies and procedures do not violate the rights of students as guaranteed by the United States and Arizona constitutions and laws.
4. Adopt and enforce policies and procedures that prohibit students from wearing any type of clothing, accessories and jewelry that is worn with the intent to convey affiliation with a criminal street gang as defined in section 13-105.

G. A student or a student's parent shall not initiate legal action to enforce this section unless the student or the student's parent has done the following:

1. The student or the student's parent shall submit a complaint in writing with the specific facts of the alleged violation to the principal of the school. The principal shall investigate the complaint and respond in writing, including a description of any action taken to resolve the complaint, within fifteen days of receiving the written complaint.
2. If the action taken by the principal of the school does not resolve the complaint of the student or the student's parent, the student or the student's parent shall submit a complaint in writing with the specific facts of the alleged violation to the superintendent or designated administrator. The superintendent or designated administrator shall investigate the complaint and respond in writing, including a description of any action taken to resolve the complaint, within twenty-five days of receiving the written complaint.
3. If the action taken by the superintendent or designated administrator does not resolve the complaint of the student or the student's parent, the student or the student's parent may pursue legal action to enforce this section.

H. For the purposes of this section, "public educational institution" means any of the following:

1. A school district, including its schools.
2. A charter school.
3. An accommodation school.
4. The Arizona state schools for the deaf and the blind.

A.R.S. § 15-113 – Rights of parents; public educational institutions; definitions

A. A parent of a student in a public educational institution has the right to review learning materials and activities in advance. A parent who objects to any learning material or activity on the basis that the material or activity is harmful may request to withdraw that student from the activity or from the class or program in which the material is used and request an alternative assignment.

B. A charter school may require parents to waive the right to object to learning materials or activities pursuant to subsection A as a condition of enrollment if the charter school provides a complete list of books and materials to be used each school year before the student enrolls. If the charter school introduces books or materials that were not disclosed

prior to enrollment, the parent retains the right to object to those materials pursuant to subsection A.

C. A charter school may require that any request to review learning materials or activities or to withdraw the student from learning materials or activities pursuant to subsection A be made in writing.

D. A public educational institution shall obtain signed, written consent from a student's parent or guardian before using video, audio or electronic materials that may be inappropriate for the age of the student.

E. For the purposes of this section:

1. "Objects to any learning material or activity on the basis that it is harmful" means objections to a material or activity because of sexual content, violent content, or profane or vulgar language.

2. "Public educational institution" means any of the following:

(a) A school district, including its schools.

(b) A charter school.

(c) An accommodation school.

(d) The Arizona state schools for the deaf and the blind.

A.R.S. § 15-730 – Access to instructional material by parents and guardians

On written request, school personnel designated by the governing board shall permit parents or guardians access to instructional materials currently used by or being considered for use by the school district by making available at least one copy of the instructional material for review by the parents or guardians. Parents or guardians may take printed textbooks, printed supplementary books and printed subject matter materials from the school district premises for a period of not more than forty-eight hours. Parents or guardians may review all other materials, including films, only on the school district premises for a period of not more than forty-eight hours. Parents or guardians may review all other materials, including films, only on the school district premises.

FERPA Notification of Rights

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students over 18 years of age ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are:

(1) The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the School receives a request for access.

Parents or eligible students should submit to the School principal [or appropriate school official] a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The School official will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

(2) The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes is inaccurate.

Parents or eligible students may ask the School to amend a record that they believe is inaccurate. They

should write to the School principal [or appropriate school official], clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it is inaccurate. If the School decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the School will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

(3) The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the School as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the School Board; a person or company with whom the School has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); or a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks.

A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

[Optional] Upon request, the School discloses education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll. [NOTE: FERPA requires a school district to make a reasonable attempt to notify the parent or student of the records request unless it states in its annual notification that it intends to forward records on request.]

(4) The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the School District to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are: Family Policy Compliance Office, US Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20202-590